

In the Service of the Nation: It is Never Just Another Christmas

**By
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In December of 1776, George Washington crossed the Delaware River to attack and defeat the Hessians at Trenton. This Christmas victory gave our fledging nation the best present possible; hope and a chance for survival. In every war and operation hence, the American military has found a way to remember and celebrate Christmas. This year is no exception to this heritage of remembering, even when political correctness appears to reign supreme; Soldiers, Marines, Sailors and Airmen will pause, give thanks in their own way, and cherish being with their loved ones, or wishing they could be.

"Peace on Earth" and "Goodwill towards men" mean something to people who give and risk so much; this season of hope and family is a special time for service members and their families. Military families know how special this time of year is; they measure deployments by a "before" or "after" Christmas return date. For those warriors fortunate enough to be home with their families this year, thoughts will inevitably drift back to other Christmases, to times spent away from home and loved ones. There will be memories of Christmases spent with their "other" family, their "warrior" family, in remote and dangerous locations. Many will recall the images and smells of Christmas dinners delivered by helicopter, or religious services on the hood of a military vehicle, led by a Chaplain, under a canopy of stars in some foreign land. Some will stop and reflect on fallen comrade.

Christmas time is indeed special for all military families and service members. Every war and generation has marked this season in their way, to the best of their abilities, given their circumstances. From the foxhole to the flight line, privates and generals alike will stop and share a special point in time for as long as they can, and then continue their assigned missions and tasks.

Customs and beliefs aside, what is important is that we treat each other as family, a military family made up of many different peoples with different faiths and beliefs. We are a family willing to sacrifice for each other, a family with a tradition of making this time of year special for all.

How will you celebrate this year? Hopefully in the comfort of your home with loved ones. Regardless of your plans, it is appropriate to take time to remember those service members still in harm's way or separated from their loved ones. Reach out to those unmarried service members and make this time of year special for them as well. There are veterans, young and old, who need our help. Remember the fallen and their families. Whether you say "Merry Christmas" or "Happy Holidays," we all must find a way to say - "we care and we remember."